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# Medals and Medallions

## Sarah Ford Medal

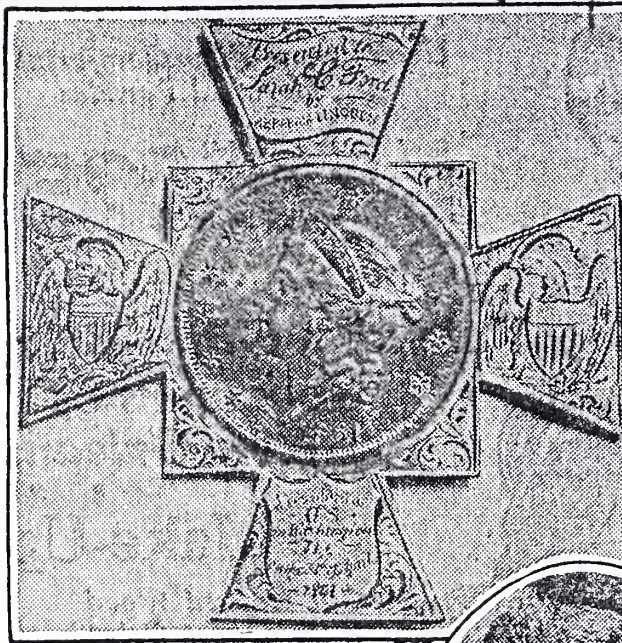
Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

120.00 Gold Rec.

# Has Medal Lincoln Gave His Mother

Times - Picayune 2-10-27



Miss Sara Catherine Ford as she looked at the time Abraham Lincoln gave her the medal pictured here, and her son, Charles J. McKenna, who proudly displays it to friends on the birthday of the martyred Civil war president.

## BANQUET TO MARK LINCOLN BIRTHDAY

Covers for 500 to Be Laid  
at Affair Arranged for  
Monday

Judge John Jennings of Knoxville Tenn., will be the principal speaker Monday at the Lincoln Day luncheon in Tip Top Inn of The Roosevelt commemorating the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. Because of the coincidence of Lincoln's birthday and Mardi Gras the celebration was arranged for February 11 instead of February 12.

Commodore Ernest Lee Jahncke president of the National Republican Club of Louisiana, will preside at the luncheon, which will be attended by Republicans and Democrats alike, although arrangements were made by the Republican club.

More than 500 reservations have been made, according to E. J. Rodrigue, treasurer of the luncheon committee. A program of music and songs by well-known artists has been arranged.



# ORLEANIAN TELLS HOW CHILD GAINED PRESIDENT'S LOVE

## Birthday of Martyr Brings Characteristic Story of "Honest Abe"

"Mr. Lincoln, you've got the longest legs I ever saw."

"Miss Sarah, I think you deserve a medal."

So it happened that Miss Sarah Catherine Ford, aged seven, received a gold and silver medal from Abraham Lincoln, a medal which Sarah's son, Charles J. McKenna of 2122 Rousseau street, New Orleans, shows proudly to his friends every year on Lincoln's birthday, February 12.

Sarah, a little girl with black eyes and black hair parted in the middle and hoopskirts swinging as she walked, went to see the president in the White House in April, 1861. While here father talked to the president she sat on the official knee, pulled the official whiskers, decided that the official countenance was ugly but nice, and remarked that the official legs were the longest she had ever seen.

Mr. Lincoln began to laugh. He laughed and laughed and laughed. Several weeks later a messenger brought to Sarah's home a present from the White House, a brilliant twenty-dollar gold piece, held in a Maltese cross of silver. On the cross was inscribed, "Presented to Sarah C. Ford by Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States, on the 24th of April, 1861."

### Climax of Adventures

The medal came as the climax to a series of adventures that the war had brought to Sarah and her father. Sarah's father, John A. Ford, had been a soldier in the Mexican war, and after the war he married and went to live in Petersburg, Va., where he opened a book and stationery shop. Business prospered until the noise of the crack between North and South shook every business from Maine to Texas. Mr. Ford did not approve of secession, and as most of the residents of Petersburg were as Southern as sweet potatoes and hominy grits, he was bound to get into trouble.

There is a frail and tattered copy of the New York World for May 7, 1861, in which a Washington correspondent tells about it in the fine print and quaint phraseology of the day.

"The subject of the following—John A. Ford—was an old soldier in the Mexican war," begins the Washington correspondent, starting his story at the beginning instead of at the climax, which he reaches only after a deal of circumlocution. But if you read long enough you discover that Mr. Ford, being a man of Union sympathies, was suspected of dire treason by his Virginia neighbors,

who sought to have him hanged or at least locked up. A friend of his managed to spirit him away from a mob that was chasing poor Mr. Ford up one street and down another, and the friend secreted him in the family tomb along with the corpse.

### In Tomb Many Hours

Here Mr. Ford remained about thirty-six hours while the mob ransacked the town, quaking like Sindbad among the dead. At three o'clock in the morning, after Mr. Ford had had time to do considerable meditating among the departed, his friend stealthily unlocked the tomb and told him to make a dash for the railroad station and the Richmond train.

While Mr. Ford was shivering along the street his friend hurried to the home of a neighbor who had been caring for seven-year-old Sarah since her father's disappearance. He stole Sarah out of bed and deposited her in her father's lap as the train for Richmond was about to puff out of town.

After more adventures he managed to get to Washington, or, as the 1861 correspondent "succinctly puts it: "In 'due' time he arrived with his little daughter in this city." In Washington he applied for an army commission on the strength of his Mexican war record, and was made a captain—the Washington correspondent relates that he applied for a lieutenantcy, but that Secretary Cameron, after hearing of his tombstone experience, made reply, "No, my noble sir, a lieutenantcy is not enough for you, you shall receive a more honorable appointment."

### Interview With Lincoln

Whether or not events transpired in such Alexandrine language, at any rate Mr. Ford of Virginia became Captain Ford of the United States army. It was in the course of his military duties that he went soon afterward to have an interview with President Lincoln.

Sarah went with him. While she sat on President Lincoln's knee she told him what she thought of people who didn't agree with her father. She told Mr. Lincoln she'd like to shoot them all. Altogether, the upshot of the whole thing was that she received a medal.

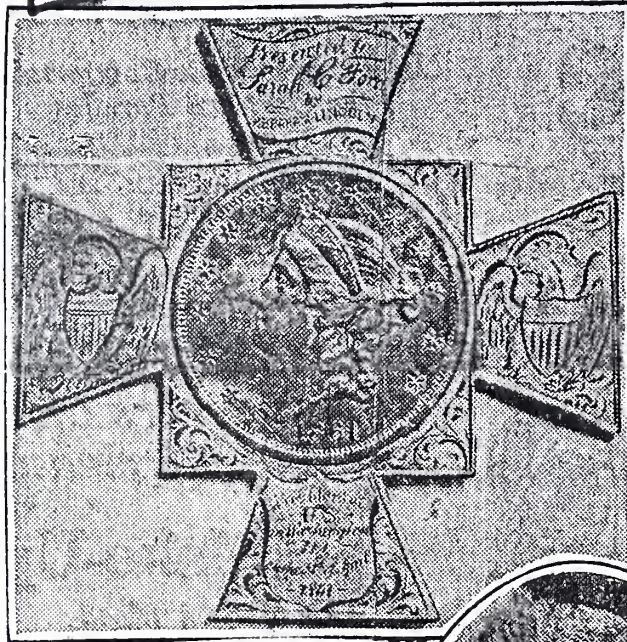
Mr. Ford died during the war. Sarah's girlhood was largely spent in Pennsylvania, where she married Francis X. McKenna. They later went to live in Atlanta with their children, and here Sarah died in 1893, leaving the medal to her son. He drew up a special will to take care of the medal, for offers from museums and individuals had taught her how valuable it was.

The medal now belongs to Charles J. McKenna of New Orleans, who keeps it sacredly, taking it out only on special occasions, such as Lincoln's birthday, when he tells his friends the story that he and his brother and sisters heard so often in their mother's home. It is a charming story, beginning with the tombstone and ending with the medal, which Sarah received two weeks after she had sat on the president's knee.

"....And I always thought," so the story always ended, "that it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen."



# Has Medal Lincoln Gave His Mother



Miss Sara Catherine Ford as she looked at the time Abraham Lincoln gave her the medal pictured here, and her son, Charles J. McKenna, who proudly displays it to friends on the birthday of the martyred Civil war president.

NEW ORLEANS, LA. PICAYUNE  
FEB. 10, 1922

## A Criticism and a Medal



By ROBERT P. KING

WE have heard so much about the little Westfield, New York girl, who suggested to Mr. Lincoln that he would look better with a beard, but I doubt if many of my readers have heard about the little girl who received a specially engraved medal from the President for criticizing the length of his legs? Of course, I imagine there were other factors that entered into the affair beside the criticism, but the facts remain, that she did say, "You've got the longest legs I ever saw," and,—she did get a medal!

The story I know to be authentic, as I received the information from one of the family several years ago, and the medal itself will bear witness to the essential features of the story. It was in April 1861, that Captain Ford, the father of Sarah Ford, the recipient of the medal, was censured for severe measures he used in suppressing the riots in Baltimore, and was summoned to Washington to explain the situation fully to President Lincoln, taking his little daughter, Sara, seven years old, with him.

The President asked that Sarah be admitted with her father. After hearing the Captain's story, Mr. Lincoln said he believed Captain Ford had done his duty. Presently he looked down at Sarah, dark-haired, little and gawky. She looked back at him and said:

"I wish I was a soldier; I would shoot everyone that didn't feel the same way my father did."

Lincoln answered that he wished Sarah was a soldier, he would fill his army with Sarah-soldiers. Then he took her on his lap. She peered into his face, then down at his legs, and said: "You've got the longest legs I ever saw!"

Lincoln laughed. Before she left he said, "You're a brave little girl."

This is the story as obtained by the New Orleans Item from one of Sarah Ford's sons; of course it was related to him by his mother who was a mere child of seven years when the incident occurred; there probably was more to it than this, as there is no question about the impression Sarah made on the President, as evidenced by the thought he gave at this time of National stress to the medal he had engraved for her after sending a messenger to obtain Sarah's full name, shortly after this the medal was forwarded to her. It is of silver, in form of a Maltese Cross with square center with \$20 gold piece inserted therein; on the upper section of the cross are the words, "Presented to Sarah C. Ford by Abraham Lincoln." At the bottom is the rest of the inscription, "President of the U. S. Washington, D. C. on the 24th of April 1861." The sections at right and left show a spread eagle with shield on breast. Sarah Ford, in later life, married Francis McKenna, a contractor, and lived with him at Homestead, Pa. She died in 1893. Her husband's death occurred in 1917 in New Orleans. A son, John inherited the medal; upon his death, it went to his brother, Charles, who at last accounts, had it in his possession.

